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REVIEW
2004

THE LEE REVIEW POLICY

The Lee Review wishes to acknowledge those who seek to glorify God with the gifts that He has provided them. To that end, we have diligently labored to produce a publication that we, the staff, students, and faculty of Lee University, can pride ourselves in. We regret that not everything submitted to the magazine can be published. We have, however, attempted to select those works which we find to best reflect this magazine's commitment to presenting through art the truth of an authentic Christian life, life with heartache, questions, struggles, failures, victories, joy, happiness, answers, exuberance, lament, and fun. We ask that as you read through this anthology, you seek to understand the vast nature of God and the many ways he works among his beloved people

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Human Portraits



Photo by Anna Gregson

“Alone, she is ignorant as
black rock, and much more
silent ...”

purple foil candy wrapper

a purple foil candy wrapper floats and skips across a blacktop parking lot with the gentle urging of the wind. like some sort of modern tumble weed, it's just the remains of something that once was, given new life from a sweet april breeze. now this girl takes a seat on the stoop in front of her family's brownstone. it's late, around two a.m., as her so-called love drives off leaving her feeling nauseated and giddy. curiosity quelled, her heart at her feet, then sits serenely smoothing it out with her pinky and thumb, ring finger and thumb, middle finger and thumb, index finger and thumb, smelling the sweetness that's still lingering. as she's wondering what kind of sugary confection it once held, she is yanked back to earth by the sound of mother questioning her with concern and disappointment. she drops the ornate wrapper to the ground and at her mother's gentle urging wearily ascends the steps to her home and crumbles into her bed falling asleep still fully clothed as mother lovingly runs her fingers up and down small strands of her daughter's hair with her pinky and thumb, ring finger and thumb...

Tony Eubank

I am From...

I am from beautiful pictures in pretty frames,
From belly laughs and happy memories and dancing to oldie songs.
I am from freshly baked sourdough bread and spaghetti and vegetable
soup,
From lingering over cups of something warm and delicious.
I am from finding safety in the arms of my beloveds.

I am from aching insides and waiting rooms,
From ultrasounds and swallowed shrieks and long needles,
And I.V. tubes and tears that fall like rain sometimes.
And I am from joy that spreads its warmth over me like sunshine
Just when I think the sorrow will freeze my very soul forever.

I am from my father's wisdom,
My mother's hardworking hands,
And my sister's strength.
I am from my God's unspeakable grace.

Hannah Moore

I AM NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM

I AM MORE AND LESS

i am losing my voice and becoming a whisper.

highways and planes and railroad cars are all passing me by.

the story of my life is interesting for about 5 minutes and that is all you can take before you tune me out and i fade into the background of forgotten moments and one-night stands and i am just like you because you force me to be.

harsh and cruel and sometimes life has nothing to offer me, save for a few shining angelic patches of sunlight and i glory in what that is and soak myself in something real and brief until i am lost again, having stolen some solace, what small bit of joy that was mine for the taking, clutching it to my breast and inadvertently pressing all of the goodness out of it, loving it too hard.

these are the things i would love to say, the thoughts that should never be spoken, the passion that fills me and fizzles out, enigmatic sparklers of truth.

Lindsay Duncan

To Thomas, Named the Twin

From gulping rued
inquiry
I'm numbed in bleary silence

Truth stands remote
not fleshed enough
to touch my shrouded senses

Didymus
of my soul
rash blurter
of my questions

if I could be
bold like you
sound doubts
out to the others

might Christ then bring
into out midst
his peace
his wounds
his surety?

Barbara K. Olson
(published in Perspective, October 1992)

Mary's Song

I knew who you were;
the angel told me:
I can't pretend I was deceived.
I knew from the beginning.
You were more than mine—
You belonged to the world—
The hope of humankind.

But it was my womb that felt those butterfly whirrings
when you moved for the first time.

Mine was the agony of travail,
lying on straw and looking up at the stars—
the *one* star that meant you were not mine.

I nursed you at my breast
and felt the sweet yearning that bound us together.

And knowing you were more than flesh,
Now and then I saw myself in the tilt of your chin,
the set of your lips, the flash of your eyes.
Yes, God was in your rebuke at the temple that day,
but He spoke with *my* voice.

How could I help but want to hold you back,
keep you safe a while longer?

God warned me that the sword that would pierce my heart,
but nothing could have prepared me for that.

My son—with just the hint of curl in his hair like mine—
the one I thought the world wanted—

in disgrace, shamed as a criminal—worse, an instigator.

(You were, by the way, but not so they could know.)

Standing by helplessly, a mother feels the pain of her child.

Some of the others ran away—
I couldn't.

Feeling each blow hammer those spikes into my flesh,
I had to stand there, accusing God with you when you asked,
“*Eloi, eloi, lama sabachtani?*”

Seeing that spear driven into your heart,
piercing you just like Simeon foretold,

I felt it pierce my heart, too.

John led me away when it was over—“finished,” you said.

Again I tried to let go—like that day at the temple—

And the other time you sent me away—

(You knew what was ahead, didn't you?)

The blackness of that afternoon
Gave way to midnight darkness the next day.

Even the pain of watching you die,
feeling each rattling gasp tear at my throat,
was better than the emptiness of
the world without you in it, without hope.

Sunday dawned--if you could call that light
Which woke me to such darkness and drew me back to that tomb
where we had hastily buried your body before the Sabbath.
What I felt was the depth of emptiness grew still more hollow
as we stood there before a gaping void,
unable to comprehend sight—
or not seeing.

Stories swirled around Jerusalem,
the guards swearing the body stolen.

I heard only *one* word: gone.

The tomb—the world—was empty.

All the quietly pondered moments of joy and pain
whirled around in my brain,

and just when I would have succumbed to despair,

Mary stumbled toward me with the news:

“I've seen Him!”

Superkid

I slip the blanket from the chair
 Craving my old power,
 And tie it around my shoulders.
 The knot hangs wryly,
 Like the crooked wings of a seagull.
 My cloak is red-and-green
 And it melts the cement walls,
 Making it a windy Christmas
 Inside my throat.
 I have to smile.
 My heart and breath reach toward the end
 Of the ruler-taut hallway.
 I'm waiting, waiting...
 Where's that right beat?
There!
 My legs are exploding,
 Bursting from the hall,
 Rocketing off the planet,
 And no one can stop me!
 My eyes shine neon,
 My feet slice air,
 My hero beats me senseless!
 My breath trails the edge of my cape,
 Kicking and screaming
 In self-made wind,
 Boiling green-and-red fury!

I'm laughing, waking, dropping time—

I see myself there,
The four-year-old blur,
Zapping the bad guys,
Ignoring the grown-ups,
Crushing their kryptonite,
And finally,
Frantically,
Flying.

Amber Noel



photo by Ryan Shay

“ I love you more than you could ever know”

He passed the candy to me in a manner of expectation—with purpose. I twirled the red and white peppermint’s plastic wrapping until the mint dropped into my hand. I held it proudly back to my grandfather, as though the unwrapping were a difficult task for a fourteen-year-old. I watched a slow smile ease over his wrinkled face.

“If you could do anything over again in your life, what would it be?” I was used to asking sophomoric questions at that age in an attempt not only to gain knowledge but also to gain a certain amount of respect from the listener.

“I would learn languages,” my grandfather answered, his crooked smile deepening, his low voice accenting the words with Southern charm. “With languages, you can talk to anyone. Then you can understand.”

I looked earnestly at my grandfather’s crooked fingers that appeared ancient in the light from the fireplace. That day I didn’t comprehend his simple statement of wisdom—my grandfather’s attention was still too novel for me to focus on the deeper meaning of his words. I needed to learn that before I could understand his words, I had to understand my grandfather; before I could understand my grandfather, I had to understand myself. And my grandfather was the one who taught me to know who I was.

Years before when I was ten, I remember how my grandfather’s laugh would echo inside his ranch house. The rolling laugh wasn’t joined by my own, but was blended with the annoyingly high pitched giggle of my little cousin Kory, a sandy blonde kid with a pug nose who had just made a remark that only he and my grandfather found amusing. The inclusive pair were completely oblivious to the sigh I let escape as they huddled over an old chest full of rusty tools. Another giggle erupted from the duo, and I rolled my eyes and slunk out to the sweltering carport. My jealousy for my grandfather greedily mounted as I felt the Georgia sun heat the rough cement under my feet.

His eyes, mind, and approval always seemed somewhere else, on somebody else. I never felt as if I were the center of his attention for a moment. This lack of acknowledgment transformed my reactions to him: from a small pout grew jealousy, self-pity, and finally an attempt to sever emotional ties with him. Never should I have allowed resentment to brood so long in my thoughts. But I was oddly happy in my feelings, because I thought I was strong despite what I considered a raw deal of a grandfather.

But something changed. If only I could recollect some moment, or action, or event that would explain why my grandfather started showing his love to me. Perhaps it was the memory of an earlier heart attack, or how his old friends were passing away around him, or maybe he noticed the sunny little girl didn't quite let herself be as bright as she used to around him. But I remember one day, when I was thirteen, I had started to fall asleep on my mother's lap and he bent over and kissed me on the top of my head. It was so simple a gesture—yet every preconceived notion I had of my grandfather was shattered by that one kiss. I had known he loved me; I knew now he was not afraid to show me.

After that day, when he sat on the blue couch in the living room, I no longer scampered past him, but to him. He was a mathematical genius, and I reveled in the time we would sit for hours, reading from engineering books and quizzing each other. But I never found the books as interesting as the man.

"What number do you multiply by the circumference to find the diameter of a circle?"

"Well, it's .3131. Right?"

"No, you're thinking of .3183." He saw me wince at my mistake on the simple question. "But that sure was close. How about the pounds raised one foot per second in horsepower?"

Now those casual moments, rusty from the passing of time, hover on the fringes of my memory. The most vibrant of my recollections of Papa center on his experience in the Korean War. I was the only grandchild he discussed this with, and I admit to a certain amount of pride because of it. Sometimes he would come up

to me with the tattered shoebox of pictures and silently sit down. He had only been a young man then, his now-silvered hair blond and wavy, his dimpled cheeks smoother, his slender frame taller; but his blue eyes still gleamed as brilliantly. As those crooked fingers held picture after picture, I knew he was showing me something precious. One photograph depicted a handsome youth in slacks and a white shirt, standing on a metal boat.

“It was freezing here, but I only wore a t-shirt. All the other boys couldn’t stand the cold and had to wear coats.”

His laugh showed he enjoyed his youthful pride. In the next picture he was playing jump rope with the little children of a village. The game had caused his cap to be knocked backwards from his forehead while the children’s faces were frozen with laughter in the black and white print. But a picture of a boy held him in silence. Minutes passed, and I prodded him with a question.

“Who was he?”

“Jojo. He was just a boy there. I thought he was eight—but he was really fifteen.” I saw his eyes crease as he stared at the Asian youth more earnestly. “He lived with us because he didn’t have anywhere else to go. He would work for us, cleaning in our rooms, doing odd jobs.” His eyes shadowed as his mouth opened hesitantly, pausing in anticipation of his next words. At first they came slowly, reluctantly. “He was the first person I ever beat. He wouldn’t clean the room.” His voice hardened and I knew he was angry with himself for beating Jojo. Then he shuffled the picture into the stack and tried to appear impassive.

But there were times when we would forget the past and act like children. We would spontaneously throw pillows at each other from across the living room while the rest of the family was watching TV or playing a game. I would sit in this wingback leather chair, and he would come up behind me and tilt it back, roaring with laughter at my yell of surprise. I would be reading a book in the back bedroom, and suddenly the lights would start flashing on and off. I’d look up and see my Papa flicking the switch with his old crooked finger. I would laugh and tell him he was wasting electricity. He

merely grinned more deeply.

My papa grew more and more loving towards me as the years wore on. One Christmas I had just returned from a piano performance and I was still dressed in the ball gown attire. I came in and saw him sitting on the sofa. He held out his hand to me and I grasped it and pulled, thinking he meant me to yank him up. But instead he held on and twirled me around like a little princess, my black skirt flaring out and my delicate earrings swinging against my neck. Then he tucked me in his arms and bent his head down near my ear. His words were so still, so quiet, yet intensely earnest.

“I love you more than you could ever know.”

As he said this I laid my head down gently on his chest and breathed in his pine scent. There are few times in life I was happier.

Curtis Glenn Mauldin, Sr. died May 13, 2002. It was the day after Mother’s Day and my family was shopping. I watched as my father answered his phone, his tanned brow creasing as he stared off into space. Without a word he lowered his head and closed his eyes. I had never seen him act like that before. He gave the phone to my mother and pulled my sister and me aside.

“Papa died.”

I only remember a feeling of heat rushing up my neck. I covered my face with my hands and let the whole world hear me cry.

I sat cold and aching in the funeral home. The fresh flowers, more than I had ever seen, appeared frozen in reality—just like I felt. It was too sudden. He was gone too quickly. Everything I saw was impossible. He was immortal, wasn’t he? I couldn’t stand seeing those beautiful hands, so crooked from work, no longer alive. I didn’t want to be in the same room with him, yet I couldn’t stop feeling the urge to be near him. My mother said, more to herself than anyone else, “He’s just Papa without the snoring.”

After the service as I walked out to the car, I realized how many people were there. Crowds of people filled the back of the church, packed the foyer, and stood in lines outside. There were

little children looking up into the faces of elderly friends. There were black, Hispanic, and white strangers consoling each other, and business managers walking next to Waffle House waitresses still in their uniforms. There was my Papa, alive as ever, inspiring me through those people. Each expression I saw showed love mixed with pain. Their faces reflected his influence on their lives—how he supported and helped through joys and trials, comforted and laughed, how he caused them to live and dream and inspire.

Even now, years later, I remember that night in front of the fireplace with my grandfather, discussing what he wished he could have done. He had given me the key to a life lived over again, and I eagerly took it. He wanted to be a traveler, a learner, a lover of people. He passed that love onto me through the memory of him. I will not regret the time I lost with him, but love the time I had. Because of this, I push myself as he would have pushed me, encourage myself as he would have encouraged me, and love myself as he loved me. For there is one thing I will always have—those treasured words:

“I love you more than you could ever know.”

Anna Tucker

The Gypsy

Every evening, vagrant sky
holds the future in her palms
and offers it behind tattoos
and thick, makeshift curtains.

Asking price: little less than a soul
to follow her kohl-and-star eyelids.

Blue teases fluttering like fine fringe,
she charades,
and we follow,
deeply trusting the scent
of her dark, exotic curves.

In her slow hustle of night for day,
more subtle than the slip of knives,
she beckons,
distracts the world
with a cosmic crystal ball:

Brooding onyx and sapphire blood,
ancient fire from ancient forge,
winks from countless white-hot flutings
flaunt the cold wisdom of untouched glass;

And we wonder like children,
not seeing beyond the smoke of her hair
or the tinkling of her trillion tiny bells.

Alone, she is ignorant as black rock,
and much more silent.

Amber Noel

My Wife in the Supermarket

My wife, in the supermarket, bends—
arches reaching for a high-shelf bottle:
olive oil, extra virgin curves like an Italian smile,
her ballerina instincts flowing beneath the surface
of blue jeans,
electrifying soup cans and cabbages,
transforming grocery shopping into the reason
that I reached before our first kiss
and the reason I finally slept
without missing starlight.
Passing through aisles of fruits, vegetables, crackers,
I follow her like the moon:
I rush against beaches and sing through foaming lips
songs I intend for love that,
this side of mystery all sound like crashing.
She bends, she turns,
and I can almost remember the future:
pirouettes and moonshines in the supermarket.

Eric Biddy



Photo by Jordan Lee

Waste of Time

See, there's this girl that lives on my floor. She's really skinny. Not the pole kind of skinny that everyone practically is when they're seven or eight, but the flat kind of skinny. She's so skinny that I'm pretty sure if I pushed her over, she'd fall sort of fluttery and crinkle on the carpet, like a bunch of old tissue paper or something. She has great big poofy blonde hair and wears red, red lipstick that always smears because she wears it about three inches thick and slides her lips around in circles whenever she's listening to something or feeling sexy. She likes people to notice her lips, I think. She gets a lot of attention anyway, 'cause she's from L.A., and she's met Mel Gibson. Mel even signed her shoulder in permanent marker, like she was some kind of baseball, and she hasn't washed that spot since, she says.

Okay, really, I'm just kidding about the last half of that stuff. I don't know why I said it, I can't take lying for long, even if it's just kidding around, so give me a break. I mean, I like to make stuff up sometimes. So sue my face off. If you wanna know the truth, this girl is my roommate. And actually, she doesn't see *anything*, not hair, not the color red, not even Mel Gibson. She's blind, you know. She can't see a single thing, but it's funny because her clothes always match. Come to think of it, she only ever wears the same green shirt and jeans, anyway. It's a t-shirt that's so tight you can see wrinkles in her skin where it bunches up around her armpits. The shirt's always inside out, too. I want to cut the tag off so bad, even though it would probably leave a little raggedy stump. At least then it wouldn't look so dumb where people can see it sticking out like a friggin' flag, like she's a Fruit of the Loom patriot or something.

I mostly wish I could take some of those doughy brown 'n' serve dinner rolls and stuff 'em in the back of her pants, give her some butt. But don't tell anyone that, 'cause I'm not really a creep, I'm just concerned about the serious lack of *gluteus maximus*, here. She really doesn't have any—at all. Her backside's like a vacuum, a *black hole*, of fat. Her pants practically cave in.

And then there are those orange socks. The socks that are so

neon bright they hurt you to look at them—and not just hurt your eyes, either. They make your feet ache, just thinking about wearing ‘em. The brown stains never come out of the bottoms, either. I always do her laundry, because she deosn’t have any arms. Besides not having eyes. But it tweaks me because I can never get those brown stains out. I almost used bleach on them once, but the thought of these bright, hurt-your-whole-body orange socks with these sicky, whitish-yellow bottoms from bleach almost made my stomach hurt. Then her socks wouldn’t just be normal-looking dirty, they’d be like slugs or something. Slugs for socks? At least people would know where you’d been. From the slime trail, I mean.

No one really notices my roommate anyway. She’s pretty new here, but you’d think she’d get a bunch of attention, especially from people trying to be nice and ignore her because she looks so funny. I’m sorry, but she does look weird, not having any arms, or even really useful feet to fill the socks. If they could see her butt all the time, they’d probably try not to notice even harder. She really doesn’t even go out, to be honest. She just kind of stays in the floor, like I said at first—a skinny little paper sloth with dirty socks and no butt and her shirt tag flapping everywhere. You know, she doesn’t even sleep in a normal bed, just in that same spot on the floor. I guess if I had all of her problems, I’d need to lay down in the middle of the floor, too, just to spread my arms out and forget things and breathe from the bottom of the room, where the freshest air always is (or at least would be if the rest of the room caught on fire). Well, she can’t really spread her *arms* out anyway, but you know what I mean. And even if she could climb up to my top bunk, she wouldn’t want to breathe up *there*, especially in the winter, with the heater blowing dry, smelly air al the time, suffocating me. It’s enough to make you feel almost crispy or something. I’m so crazy for spring, anyway.

Wow, I should be studying, but I just can’t stop staring at her. I think she’s sleeping right now, but you can never quite tell because her face just sort of isn’t there, either, like her eyes and arms and feet. Mostly you just have to make up what she’s thinking in our

mind and then figure out those thoughts into words. It makes it a heck of a lot easier on me when I feel like she's gonna complain about something, because then I just make up some nice, quiet words in my head instead, like, "I like your plaid pajama pants" or "I think I smell someone making popcorn down the hall." Then I say yes to whatever thing I made up for her to say, even if it's not a question. Because it makes me feel bigger than her, then, and I like that. I don't mean better, just bigger, like Queen Elizabeth saying "yes" and nodding to someone who has just complimented her on conquering France (or whatever the great Virgin Queen supposedly did besides staying a virgin). You totally accept it because you don't understand how it makes sense, like "yes" means a lot more than you think it could, and that makes whoever said it bigger than you, see?

Anyway, my roommate, she can be great, really, even if I do pick on her. I don't think of her as handicapped, just flat and limbless and blind, so I can pick on her. And if for nothing else, then for company she's alright. But sometimes she makes me nervous 'cause she's so friggin' *flat*, and I wish she'd just sit up and scarf some potpies or cookies once in awhile. I told her once that when I made my first million, I'd spend the first hundred dollars of the first twenty percent of it just on cupcakes for her to eat, white and yellow and chocolate ones, and some pudding-filled (I heard somewhere that they can do that to cupcakes). With tons of sprinkles or chocolate chips or whatever else she wanted on them, just so they were bright and very greasy.

Okay, no, actually I never said that to her. I think I was just thinking it very hard. Or maybe I did say it, but she was sleeping. I dunno. She's sleeping all the time, so I forget what all I say that she really hears. Sometimes I wanna step on her leg while she's sleeping just to wake her up. I know it's really mean, but I even sort of feel like it now. Right now I'm sitting here, and she's laying on the carpet, and the brown parts of her socks are just facing me, waiting for me to try and wash them out.

I just realized that her face (or her kind-of face) is probably

smooshed into some toenail clippings from yesterday that I forgot to pick off the floor after being too nervous to put them in the trash can in the first place. I was picking my nails and talking on the phone with my aunt Cheryl, which always makes me way too nervous to do anything else besides just listen to her talk about her three kids and PTA meetings and trips to the vet and fallen cakes and exchanging Cherrylicious for Cocoa Chic, all the time tearing my nails to teeny pieces. She talks so fast, I can't even think, and when she stops and I can't answer in a split-second, she clears her throat and says "well" like it's been this big, awkward silence. But that just *makes* an awkward silence, and I wanna just have this big, hacking fit right in her ear and pretend I have a cold, or even just lay the phone right by my roommate's head and let her talk for awhile. It's so hard to be nice, sometimes, you know? Especially when it's your family.

Actually, come to think of it, my nails're probably already ground into the carpet, the pieces are so small. I can really shred stuff up pretty good sometimes,, if I'm not paying attention, a couple times even some important stuff like receipts and math notes. I think my roommate could tear stuff up like a wicked raving puma if she ever wanted to—if she had hands to do it with, that is. I really think that people who say the least think the most, and then all that thinking sometimes builds up until it explodes out of their hands and they either write really weird stories or plays, or they beat themselves up, or they walk around with their hands in their pockets, fingers just snapping like firecrackers the whole time, waiting to blow up a building if they ever get out. If my roommate could stand up, I could just see her in this big, brownish trench coat, with the collar turned up, walking real fast with little kids scooting out of her way when she goes by because only they know what's hiding in her pockets. I might tell her that one. It's kind of funny, if you really know her.

Well, I guess I better do my homework. I have a test tomorrow afternoon in a class that always makes me want to talk to people I don't even like or visit people in the hospital that I don't even know just to have an excuse not to go. I like he teacher, I like

the kids around me, I just don't like how no one ever talks. It makes it harder for *me* to talk, and I hate feeling like a big, fat smarty-pants who has to shut her big, fat mouth because no one else is talking. I feel like I give off some sort of freakish glow that other people can't stand if I don't talk about what I think in class, like all my thoughts are just kind of leaking out of me or something. But I can't talk if no one else does. Talking to the teacher by myself just makes me sort of smell bad, too, along with having a glow. I don't know. Anyway, tomorrow's a test, so it'll be okay.

I'll have to make sure to pick up my room in the morning, though. It's starting to get really messy, especially when I'm up late and bored and just eating and typing all the time, like now. I think I've eaten five butterscotch pudding cups and about three pounds of cheesy goldfishy crackers since I started trying to stop being bored. Yeah, so I'll definitely get up early tomorrow and pick up a little bit. It's starting to get embarrassing when people walk in. And I know I'll want to jump out the *window* if anyone sees what's laying in the middle of my floor. Geez, I don't know why I did it anyway, I guess for a joke. No one is ever around here much, and no one was in here with me when I did it, but I almost felt guilty when I laid it out, anyway. I feel even worse about it now, but at least I didn't name the stupid thing.

Geez, I definitely need to pick up around here. I mean, it's really like a jungle with the clothes and the dead-rat heater grumbling out all that hot air. My jeans and my green shirt and my orange socks are gonna get hair and junk all over them anyway, I I don't get 'em off the carpet. Besides, having them all spread out like a real person is starting to give me the creeps. I really need to stop staying up late by myself and eating so much. It just wastes a bunch of time.

Amber Noel

K.L.C.G.

The glue that holds the pieces together
even though the pieces aren't really together.
I guess, if we're comparing my family to a jigsaw puzzle,
at least she somehow manages to keep
all of our pieces in one box.
(Even her own, which amazes me.)

We have no missing pieces,
she has made sure of that,
continues to make sure today
that we are whole.

And when we finally place together all the pieces,
(whenever that might be)
when the curves come together
where colors match
and we, the pieces,
can complete each other, it will be
the most beautiful picture this world has ever seen.

All colored in shades of my mother,
the most beautiful picture that I have ever seen.

Anna Gregson



Photo by Jenny Park

Six Most Important Things:

1.
Buy a Collie and name her Magritte. One warm January day,
she will leave a single, bloodless
bird's wing on the porch step and trot off
into your childhood.
2.
Do lunch with Barbie. Let her go on about her Dream
House, her pink Ferrari, life with Ken. Then Compare
scars; your one up every time. Ignore
her plastic smile. Ponder the possibilities
of breast augmentation.
3.
Take a spin in your dream ego's powerful red
Convertible. Get lost in the traffic of the Rose Parade.
Smile. Wave. Scan the sky for clouds.
4.
Pick up your boots at the shoe repair. Volunteer
To teach a self-help group at the Community Center
On how to pull yourself up by your bootstraps
While walking backward into the Aegean Sea.
5.
Send entropy a sympathy card. Years later,
you will find it in a pile of unopened mail
in the attic.
6.
Let your mind become a pressure-cooker of impressions.
Lift the lid and the steam will burn your face
and disappear.
First, fold the laundry.
Rachel Crumble

Nature



Photography by James Mann

“But, really, faith is
scribed in every stone.”

Rain Gauges

I love this time of year.

The way the mist hangs just above the grass,
Like a lady's skirt as she holds it carefully.

The way the pale moss on the north side of the trunk
Matches the indignant sky just before it bellows.

I love this time of day.

When there's nothing left to do, and I may sit
And listen to the rain as it sobs against my roof.

The way the sky turns sheet white before
Peeling back to reveal the opulent colors of sunset,
Once the tantrum is over and glistening beads
Hang from falling leaves.

I love this time.

I will never have it back, so I will collect it in memory,
As I do the murky water that quivers now in the rain gauges.
The way the sun slips low and dusk replaces golden light,
The last of the summer rainstorms are nodding off.
Within the hibernation of the cool months that follow,
the idyllic patter of drops on the earth becomes the sound of my
dreams.

Christine Braden

Untitled

as the moonlight slipped through my fingers
and slid down my leg to bathe my toes
i realized how beautiful He must be
to have created it All the way it is
it wasn't an epiphany or a revelation
just a Moment.

Amie Thompson

Untitled

He said, "October is my favorite month,"
And this night tears dimmed my eyes.
Though I long to share his sentiment,
This month of should-be orange feelings,
Yellow scents, and red tastes looms
Lonesome brown death.

Too many beginnings of ends and
Ceasings of loves have unfolded
These allotted weeks of past years.
Memories of joy are spilt and
Sucked beneath the ground under
Death's heavy shadow.
Wishing for a sunny October
Does little good when
The clouds of doleful mourning
Hover over the grievous heart and mind.

Rebekah Bowen

Cold Sea

As the cold sea crashes against the rough rocks
Inside myself I'm being torn apart
With there nothing anymore I can do to stop
The rough waves from hitting my heart
They pull and they pull taking from me
All hopes and dreams that have washed to the shore
Then dragging them back out to the cold sea
Not letting them go 'til they arrive at the lonely sea floor.

Christopher Alan Medeiros

Age

These leaves rustle on my lap:
 Their veins protruding from the dry and withered flesh.
 How they once slapped and swayed,
 Gently moving with the breezes.
 Now, their colors faded,
 They lay brittle with spots of brown.
 They used to be so flexible,
 Floating in the sunshine.
 Now they rest uncertainly at the autumn of their existence.
 These leaves, like old hands,
 Connected to old limbs,
 Rustle on my lap.

Daniel C. Tidwell



Photo by: Bethany Christopher

Conversation with the Dark

You think you'll take us down,
You, uninhibited, with enough strength
to convince us to succumb
beneath the weight of private anxieties,
the immeasurable pressure
of extravagant hopelessness.

Even the more fortunate—
those not fallen into chasms, not sucked
into the bowels of a livid storm,
those nearly whole, those basically unconsumed,
can recognize the apprehension
prior to your coming. They pause
before lifting the receiver. Look up
before the knock comes at the door.

Any day now I am expecting
a message, and all hopes are
it's a good one. The gray birds
shiver on the wires, and the welcome
mat has begun to curl up on both ends.
Some say it's the humidity, but really
we all know there's something more
going on than can be broadcasted—

and we should practice something harder than hearing,
pray the clock does something softer than strike.

Dyana Herron

Allá lejos

Respiró el aire aromado de la campaña,
 Naturaleza ruda fue como un lar.
 El verde de esmeraldas gozaba en ella
 Robando la tibieza peninsular.
 Visiones de un destino todavía incierto
 Crearon ansias sedientas de exploración.
 La vida y sus misterios se iban mostrando
 Percibidos muy dentro del corazón.
 Nuevas fisonomías y sentimientos,
 Nieve recién caída en su esplendor,
 Los octubres dorados nunca vividos,
 Tristeza y risa sentidas con más vigor.
 Canciones de gitanos, tenues lamentos
 Al alma soñadora traen su dulzor,
 Volados ondulantes, perfumados claveles
 Rojos como las motas rojas del algodón,
 Multitudes de tréboles sobre las sierras
 Escondiendo a los gnomos en su verdor,
 Vellones en los prados y en el azul del cielo
 Suspirando en silencio por lo que ya pasó.

Dora Vargas

Long Gone

She breathed the air scented with pastures;
roughness of nature was her domain.
The green of emeralds rejoiced around her
stealing the warmth of southern Spain.
Visions of destiny still uncertain
urged her to wander in lands unknown.
Life's hidden mysteries were enticing
in ways revealing to her alone.
Many new faces, many new feelings,
beautiful landscapes of fallen snow,
golden Octobers never experienced
sadness and laughter felt even more.
Songs of the gypsies, sweet lamentations,
reaching with tenderness the dreaming soul,
swishing of ruffles smell of carnations
red as the sprinkles in dotted cloth,
patches of clover on rolling hillsides,
hiding the smiling, cute leprechauns,
fleece on the prairies and in the blue skies
sighing in silence for what it was.

Dora Vargas

St. Luke's

Let me pause, here on this walk of stone
in the lazily falling sun,
in the churchyard, all alone.

The peace of God be with these souls
commemorated on plaques in gold,
entombed in marble walls, so old.

These fiery blooms here praise the dead,
each flower lifts its blood-hued head
to heaven and the star-shapes' bed.

Here cicadas chant the closing hymn,
and, silent, gaze the seraphim
from their nooks with solemn looks.

Here children play beneath ancient trees,
behind the tomb, amidst locust litanies.

But not now; tomorrow's sun will beat their brows,
on Sunday here, when holy vows
are sounded from the mouths of
sinners.

But now the passing cars recite their roaring liturgy,
and only bells sound now and then to orchestrate the hours.

Here faith is cut into the stone that caps the sepulcher;
but, really, faith is scribed in every stone.

It lies beneath the church's walls
and each brick here testifies.

This gem-like glass and emerald grass,
this carved wood door and flagstone floor,
this wrought iron gate and roof of slate,
proclaim a faith that never dies.

Steven Luke Hankins



Photo by James Mann

Untitled

Like sweet incessant bells, the
Cricket cries keep me awake.
Somehow I feel secure
Knowing they care enough
To make music tonight.
Do they serenade the coming rain?
Delight in mere springtime?
Romance a cricket lover?

Michelle M. Alvarez

Regret

Lounging on the shore of Hibiscus
In the hot magenta July summer
The amplified orange clean breeze
Tricks my senses to slumber

Echoes of waves crush every memory of desire
Erasing the emotions of the chase
Finally resisting holdin' on
To a forgettable face

Tiffany Barr

Journeys



Photo by Anna Gregson

“Now, I am where I want to be,
here, now, not there tomorrow.”

America—
First Impression

Airport
Luggage
Silence
Customs

Shuttle Bus
Blue Sky
Smiling faces
Hello!

Chicago

On the way to Chicago
I was so much reminded of home
Flat horizon
Sunrise over the plain
Vast and smooth

Thinking about home
I always think about Chicago
Same sun
Same kind of plain
Henan, China
Illinois, Chicago

Phebe Xu Gray

too big to carry on

folding

my

soul

so

I

can

put

it

in

a

suitcase

so

I

can

travel

the

world

without

a

heavy

heart

I

hope

it

doesn't

get

lost

in

the

baggage

claim

Moving

I'm sitting in my living room in my apartment on Keith Street in Cleveland, TN. This is where I sit most afternoons and mornings—on the side of my navy blue futon (which is folded up into a couch) nearest the glass door and window (which is folded up into a couch) nearest the glass door and window (which happens to be open right now: the sun is setting, the sky is a pale, clear blue, and the breeze is fresh and cool enough to announce that it's still only late winter). The coffee maker in my kitchen—a green coffee maker that I've had since my junior year in college—is in its last percolating gasps of brewing two cups of fresh-roasted Papau New Guinea, a medium-bodied, slightly earthy brew. Wherever I live generally smells faintly of coffee.

My living room is sparse but comfortable: in front of me sits a makeshift coffee table that consists of a small pine rectangular tabletop that I set on two cardboard boxes—slightly ghetto, but quite effective. Across the room sits my small, blue stuffed chair I bought from Pier I Imports when I moved in here. I don't sit in it as much as I'd like to, simply for the fact that there's no lamp near it, which makes it tough on the eyes to sit there and read a book or the current issue of *The New Yorker*—or even type on my laptop. But it's a comfortable chair, I got a good deal on it, and it saves the room from looking like no one lives here.

Above the chair on the wall—a white wall, boring, but clean—hangs a picture of a coffee cup on a saucer next to a small glass of water. Both are sitting on a rough-hewn table, and next to them on the table is—a rolled-up piece of trash? A small, crumpled flower? From this distance, I can't tell for sure; and, to be honest, I can't remember what it is. I bought that picture a few years ago—almost three, to be exact!—from a vendor in Buenos Aires. I have other pictures—from Argentina, from England, from Boston—in my apartment, including a painting on the wall behind me. I bought this framed picture, which depicts two men approaching a third man

who is standing outside a café, in Buenos Aires as well—the frame is a deep chocolate brown, and the painting is filled with similarly bold colors: greens, blues, tans, oranges—even the white in the painting seems bold. Despite this overt boldness, there's also a subtle, muted sense to the painting, as if that it's depicting occurred so late in the Buenos Aires afternoon that the colors are still pronounced but the evening, with its ability to obfuscate and mute what we see and perceive, is rapidly approaching.

To my left, standing kitty-corner, is one of my two bookshelves in the apartment (the other is in my bedroom). On the very top of this bookcase are three items: a menorah one of my Jewish students bought me for Chanukah last year, a basket with a maroon cloth in it, and a small bronze bucket with orange tissue paper that once held Halloween candy. Below that, barely visible on the top shelf, my Vermont license plate, useless now that I've registered my '91 Toyota pickup in Tennessee, leans against the back of the bookcase; in front of that are two pictures from my weeklong stay in the Lake District of England, a greeting card from a forgotten sender, and a large, glass coffee mug—my award for coming in first in my age division at a roadrace I ran recently in Chattanooga. On the next shelf down, there are several books: *Rumors of Another World* by Phillip Yancey, a noted Christian journalist; *Labrador Retrievers for Dummies*, a title which needs nothing else said about it; and, *The Art of Raising A Puppy* by the monks of New Skete—all titles that, to some degree, suggest my hopes and shortcomings: I hope to have a dog someday when I live in a place that will accommodate one (I'd rather have a Siberian Husky than a Lab, though) and I hope, too, as a Christian, to make it to the next life, but often feel that I fall far short of attaining that goal. Below that is my CD player and radio, which I have had for ten years and use frequently, and below that are Cds and a pile of old issues of *The New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, and *Runner's World*, magazines that I wish I had more time to read.

If someone were to ask me how this room represents who I am, there are a lot of answers I could give—I read a lot, I'm an

audiophile, I'm rather neat and clean (I'd prefer a room to be sparse than cluttered), and I'm a runner. However, what seems to stand out the most at the moment is how temporary this living situation is. I have a good job—I could've bought a decent coffee table, a small table to put my keys on to place next to the door, the ottoman that matches my Pier 1 chair, a side table and lamp to put near that chair, a better stereo system, maybe even some more art to adorn my walls. But I'm moving again, sometime this summer. I knew that when I came last year, so I determined not to accumulate more stuff that I would have to then pack up and move—except for that chair. I couldn't resist.

Last year, when I was completing my thesis at the University of Vermont, I learned that of the three PhD programs I had applied to, two had rejected me and one had wait-listed me as an alternate. (I remember reading that letter with both disdain and dread—disdain, that the program I had put all my hopes in considered me an “alternate,” and dread, because all of a sudden I had no plan, no future). I suddenly feared becoming what we in English studies are terrified of becoming—a young, well-educated, multiple-graduate-degree-holding bundle of academic potential and bitterness working in some cubicle at some deskjob processing insurance applications or waiting tables at Ken's Pizza while trying to make enough money to be able to afford to even *apply* to PhD programs again.

Luckily, that didn't happen. Through a turn of events (God definitely had a hand in it), I came back to Lee to teach composition for a one-year appointment. Hip-hip, hooray. My rejection letters—and “alternate” letter—suddenly became absolutely meaningless. I would make more money in one year than a grad student in English would make in three, I would have a break from the stressful rigors of graduate-study research, and I would be able to return to Lee University, where I had spent seven years of my life.

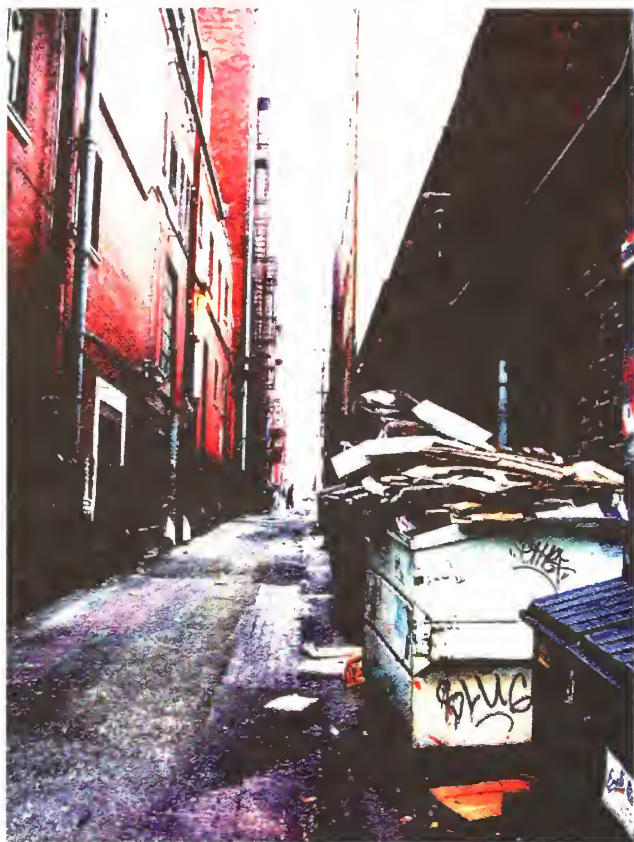
But I had to move 1200 miles, and that's not easy. First, my parents, who live in southeast Pennsylvania, came to Burlington to help me clean out my studio apartment, load up my truck and

their van, and drive seven hours to Royersford. For four weeks, my “apartment” – all of my stuff—sat in their garage. Meanwhile, I had driven to Cleveland and found this apartment—a spacious, carpeted, one-bedroom apartment with washer and dryer, a dishwasher, and a small balcony—and all that in an apartment complex with residents who are mostly elderly. Peace and quiet, indeed.

That was July of 2003; it's March, 2004, and in three more months, I'll move again, both because my one-year contract at Lee will be up and because I'm going to start on my PhD. So far, I've been accepted to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the University of New Hampshire, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Miami University (the one in Ohio) waitlisted me again—the second year in a row. Many say the hard work in choosing a PhD program is the applying, but I say it's in the actual choosing. For a long time, I leaned towards UNC-Greensboro—it's a great school, it's only six hours away (Read: short move), and the faculty there would be great to work with. But, recently, I've been leaning more towards UNH—even better faculty—faculty that I think I could work well with—more money, less teaching, and, hey, it's on the New England seacoast. For the three months out of the year that you can actually go to the beach in New England, you can't beat its coast.

So it is that, most likely, in June, I'll pack up my ghetto coffee table, fill the boxes it's sitting on with books from my bookshelf, take the painting and picture down from my living room walls, wrap my Pier 1 chair in some sort of protective plastic cover, pull my futon apart, and envelop my 10-year old CD player in bubble wrap so it will survive yet another move. Once again, I'll have friends and maybe even family help me vacuum, load the rental truck (What will I get this time? A Ryder? Penske? Last time I had Budget, I think.), and head north again. Then, I'll set up my apartment—or house—with a bit more of a feel of permanence. Lord willing, I'll be there for four or five years. Plenty of time to put some roots down and maybe even buy a bona fide coffee table.

Jeff Ringer



photography by Jordan Lee



TRAIN

TRAIN—there was a time I dreamed
I was with you
going, going, going
wherever you were going.
When you screamed, I screamed.
My heart jumped on the rails and I was in you,
chuffing off to that distant dream: **AWAY**.

No matter the place or face
the race stayed the same. Gray tones
and softest lies, unchanging days covered my
little world over,
but you were *going somewhere*.

Now I am where I want to be,
here, now, not there tomorrow.
You are going and going,
old friend,
and I am smiling,

still here.

Cara Edenfield



photo by Heather Hyder



photo by Jamion Williams

Driving to Chattanooga in the Rain

The rain was falling,
Beating against my window like the feet of a thousand angry...
(How can you finish a line like the one above?)
It rained.
I was drenched to the bone with the feeling of Christmas,
And the rain was stealing my holiday spirit.
The thunder, (like bowling balls colliding),
Rumbled on the horizon
Begging me to dance in the rain.
But who dances in the rain in December?
Finally I concede.
Spilling out of my bed, I reach for a jacket,
(The one that drips water on my pant legs)
I reach for the keys.
The Rain is driving me to Chattanooga.
Pushing me into the arms of my lover;
Into the pages of my favorite indulgence.
I rush past the flavors to choose from,
Irish Cream, Double Latte,
(History, Philosophy, Religion)
I settle into a comfortable chair that smells like fresh ink and musty
pages.
The rain pounds,
Like bombs over Hiroshima;
Deafening my silence.
I push aside the damp despondence,
As I lift the cover and read.

Daniel C. Tidwell

Free Hand Now

It's just like a ball and chain,
but I played it all, claimed it all,
made it all to be.

Around that corner is a shadow
of yesterdays gone astray, midnights
taken in stride, left to
ride...and ride...and ride...

what a ride.

I'm a Free Hand now with
no blood or nerves or quiet hum of
haunting heartaches eddying beneath
the surface.

So where's the drive?
Where's the thrusting into Life headlong
eyes squinted real tight so you can't see
The Bottom
before it hits?

no cog, no notion-motion, no flit with
fanciful winter's grip...
I'm a Free Hand now.

Cara Edenfield

It's Hard When All You've Got is Morning

Night lets you off at the corner of Six-thirty and Sleep.
The alarm blasts like the horn of a car
careening past as you step off the curb of comfort
onto the hard wood floor.

It's hard to put your body back on, to collect one's
self as one might collect a stack of
scattered papers, hard to march one's self
out into the traffic of morning when morning
advances against one like an angry mob of urgencies.

It's hard not to see the fog caught
in the trees as a heavy shroud, and gravity,
not as a safeguard against floating
through space, but as a wrestler's
grip, forcing one to one's knees.

It's hard when all one has is this moment—
No, this one, and what can't be seen
is the sun, burning through the curtain of cloud
until the opacity, though luminous vapor,
is no more solid than a sigh.

It's hard when no hint of a golden afternoon
or a flame-blue sky hangs over the highway
on the crowded commute to Usefulness and Industry.

When Purcell's *Trumpet Voluntaire* rings out
over the car radio, who could guess the light would
grasp the shroud of fog at the corners,
shake it into a gentle rain? Who could believe
that urgent angry mob would so easily dismiss itself
in an orderly fashion. You never know.
You just begin again.

Rachel Crumble

433 Worth Street

I.

Today, a Wednesday, the spires
of Trinity chapel are littered
with dirty pigeons. Nearby, a delivery
truck squats crammed with cut
flowers wrapped in white paper.
I came here because I want to see
the world heal itself, recall
its color—the opal of its nails,
the cobalt of its irises. Perhaps
this would help me forget
how I found you yesterday
evening in the bottom of the Boston Public Library
writing a letter to some girl back home.
How quickly you hid it upon my approach.
How I, to conceal my hurt,
pretended to be fascinated by a photography
display in the lobby, focusing
on the hard lines of a stripped umbrella skeleton,
the soft blur of a skirt in motion.
Now, alone in the park, I wrestle
with that old woman-curse, foreign to none
save Eve, thinking of the one time
I've met this girl, how her hair
curled down her back while mine sags
about the shoulders, how she separated
egg yolks from whites with a deft maneuvering
of the shells, how her jeans were clipped in front
with a safety pin, which you complimented.

II.

Suddenly, I feel the urge
to return home, sink quietly back into the South,
to be near the fruit stand where I let an old man

shovel his past into the back of my Lumina:
a basket of cloth daffodils, a pair of rusty scales,
a yellowed brazier. To touch
the gaping white magnolia blossoms near the entrance
to my apartment on Worth Street. Worth Street:
it is a name not without implication, like
Commerce Street, on which the town funeral home
is located. Like maybe any other name.
Strangely, nothing is sold on Worth Street,
there are no shops, only people reside here,
traveling one of two directions on its sidewalks.
Perhaps contemplating, more than those
on Maple or Brown, the intricacies of
measurement, the fallacies of design.

III.

But what harm is a letter,
or a sequence of letters—
a word
has no weight
a sentence
is not a chain or a ladder.
How can we be burdened
by the words we live beneath—
your cursive signature on the sheet in your hand,
the block letters on my green street sign.
Shouldn't they be only noise, like
the buzzing of the engine of this low-flying place,
the swell of a hundred pigeon wings striking
the air at once, sounding
like a multitude of swallows in tight throats.
The kind of swallow that keeps one from crying.
The kind that obstructs the wringing out
of any syllable of speech.

Dyana Herron

Despair, Hope



Photo by James Mann

“Seems no one stays buried for long
these days.”

Anatomy of an Addict

In the mouth the drug goes
 down the heart and out the toes,
 there's nothing to hold it together
 hollow flesh wrapped around stale air
 Zombie-fied.

There are eyes that look but don't see past
 two days maybe a week
 arms that grab but don't nothin' for long but
 mothers that cry and pray for a child
 that lost its way.

It's a club all the grieverers join, the ones whose
 daughters and sons wander off into the shining night
 and get lost in the way which way?

It's feet that walk run stumble stumble fall
 feet that take a will and go—without asking
 just go,

feet that stop at the wrong places at the wrong hour.
 Nothing is worse than a sheep that's lost its way and
 is too dumb to ask for help.

There was Jason with his sweet tea and
 David with holding rocks

(but his heart is wax and
 there's no high when it melts)

nightmare nunchuks and then echoes back
 that can make a rock cry when

it's been up all night with music and
 all the beautiful people shadowing and acting ugly
 and it sits and stares out the back door thinking of
 old heart aches and something that never should have been
 in the first place...

There's always something that is best left

unsaid and wiped clean, filed in “forgotten”—
played out in tomorrow’s face anyway.
Seems no one stays buried for long these days.

What about morphine and Miller
slap flat on a back in a
nasty Georgian alley?
There’s no hope in chips and smokes
at four in the morning stuck full of
blues and dope.

Bad seed with a weed,
weeds in the soul rocks in the cup,
you’re breaking the flow, man.

But...if a sick heart could talk it would say
it’s dark in here and I
can’t breathe, can’t see, can’t believe and
there’s got to be a way out somehow.

Maybe tomorrow I’ll try.

Cara Edenfield

Waiting Rooms

Gas up the prayer chain,
 Oil and WD-40 for the phone calls,
 Word-of-mouth,
 Pull the starter cord,
 And listen to the engine rev.

We huddle in a circle,
 In a waiting room,
 Puffy eyes avoid contact.
 The ten of us have rarely been
 Together all at once,
 And never this quiet.

Stress levels: high.
 One of us clutches himself;
 Others clutch yet others.
 But we wait
 Like a buffalo circle waiting for attack.

I watch the TV to not think:
 Mindless news.
 The Flintstones.
 An exposé on feminism.

Wait.

Wait.

Breathe.

Wait.

Fear pours from pores like stench,
 And we worry carelessly.
 We all remember times and emotions,
 Photographs of happenings,
 Melancholically reminisce about things
 I'd forgotten.

The axe is laid at the root of the tree,
A young life endangered by
?
Precious gifts contained in roots,
And crystal balls,
Fragile.
And we were scared.

Jacob Ogle

Road of Chipped Yellow

Pale, chubby youth,
never asked for much—
just the world.

Never had a dime.
Not a single plane ticket,
no way to escape hell.

So many pointless fantasies
of some engulfing wind
to capture and transport

her and her shoes of ruby red.
She wanted to trample insecurities,
on the way to an Emerald City.

No place like that broken house,
No place like that wretched prison,
No reason to click her heels.

No reason to go home.

Hannah Ogden



photo by James Mann

Snow White

Blinding white light
Obscures reality
They used to call me snow white
But I drifted
Toward reality
Imperfection
But I still try to make myself
Believe in fairytales
Pretend the world is funny
And it lasts forever
To see the truth and not believe
The world around us
Intervenes
Innocence is lost

Emily Jo

The Second Fall

spinner of worlds
to span just a few feet
trips falls
farther than Adam
harder than Eve

the stumbling-block
himself has stumbled
failed to advance
as far as defeat

so much for one step at a time

Simon the rock
is nowhere in sight
the other steps in
reversing the fall

a Cyrenian black
knows the weight of derision
lifts high the cross
to God's gravity ease

Barbara K. Olson

Little Feet

"It's so much easier to clean at night," she stated,
 "Without little feet under you..."

Her head lowered as her voice tapered off into
 the high buzz of ladies' chatting.
 Something like a lock turned over inside of me
 and a life unfolded.

Hers was a toil of the hearts, a journey in discovery and loss.
 Those "little feet" are now squeezing into men's brown shoes
 that walk on his own kitchen linoleum, office carpet,
 from home to car to job to car to home again and again
 faltering in still moments for the long-gone hem of
 his mother's skirt.

Her "little feet" ran like wheels over everything, carried her to
 and away from her mother—now weak as an infant's by punch in the
 heart—
 she is a child over again, sudden alarms taking momentum
 and leaving the sanctity of love behind...

And... somewhere in a place sunny and far away,
 where weak ones left behind swarm and mourn,
 under the dirty blanket is a pair of little feet that
 never moved past a young man's hopeful stride.

"Little feet." Oh, just to put one little foot in her hand,
 to count the toes and tickle the tender soul...

The pain is obvious.
 Little feet become big feet that hurt.

Disregard

i wish i had profoundly deep things to say about life and the injustices and atrocities she wreaks upon us.

the horror a child feels the moment she realizes she was raised by a woman who was never a child herself.

the fear of a young woman lost, not knowing what has gone wrong but knowing something has been left out of the equation.

and the search. i am desirous of everything and i can't speak the things i want to scream:

I AM EMPTY

Lindsay Duncan

Calling

Ridges bristled with winter dead
Trees lift the highway beneath my tires.

*The alarm clock, the quiet of the house at 5 a.m.,
the bills on the kitchen table are calling.*

7 a.m. twilight: up interstate 75,
my headlights are part of a moving
macramé of light.

*The wind in the trees, the telemarketers, my fourteen year old's
adolescent loneliness is calling...*

Unseen currents tear a ragged swatch
In the grey cloud blanket,
Exposing astounding blue

*My friend whose marriage is crumbling,
ungraded papers, panicked students are calling. Above
the din, my 5 year old's simple request: "Mommy, play with me" is*

*Calling: dirty laundry, my mother's absence,
my daughter's fledgling bright future is calling.*

*My husband's sonorous laughter, unwritten stories,
an uncertain future: all calling....*

Partly sunny? Partly cloudy?
Same old question.

World sadness is calling. A still small voice is calling.

My cell phone is ringing a minuet.

Without voicemail, or
caller ID, the heart
is forced to pick up
or hear the incessant ringing.
how else to know it is not
The Call
we've been waiting for?

Rachel Landrum Crumble

Resurrection Power

Jesus is resurrected every day
In the minds of those who,
Like Stephen Dunn, "thought
He was sufficiently dead."

He rises in triumph on the voices of children,
Leaps lightly from the bowed heads of seniors,
And ascends on the clouds of a spring day
Before the eyes of those who still have eyes to see.

Steven Luke Hankins



Nicole Sienkiewicz

Hope

Hope is a flame that burns deep within
It sings my thoughts and my dreams.
Filling my head with smoky haze,
through which my heart fire gleams.

I try to hide it, to put out the light,
letting my tears fall in splashes.
Yet that stubborn fire keeps on trying
to burn my doubts to ashes.

Lindsay Rose

Sleepless Tonight in Cleveland

Sleepless tonight in Cleveland
I think of you and the thousand times
you touched me into sleep—
of how I would follow your hair
into the intangible eternity of dreams
and how, there, you never walk
behind me on the silent slabs
of sidewalk that trace their way
through the midnight whispers
of our sleeping city.
Our city, which has fought
the dawn apocalypse so long
that it has forgotten the morning
and keeps time only with broken feet
in sturdy boots to the swimming silver music of the moon.
In the shaking room of my friend
who writes fire and lets me eat the ashes
I think of you, the frightening tear
in the ordinary through whom I see the world,
I think of you, and wait for the dawn.

Eric Biddy



photo by James Mann

Thoughts on the Christmas Season

In a way, I feel a little sorry for Christmas. Of all of the seasons of the year, it is the one that people are most anxious to keep within its appointed time constraints—when it is Christmas there is nothing we want to hear more than Christmas-y things, but when the season is “officially over” there is nothing we want to hear less; we are sick of it by that time. Of course, Christmas never asked to be made into something that could make anyone sick. Theoretically, it should take a back seat in importance on the Christian calendar to Easter, but we are simply unwilling to let it do so. We want Christmas to be as big as possible, and maybe we even shoulder it with burdens it cannot quite bear.

I remember driving through Atlanta a few years ago in December, when I was going through the most difficult experience of my life up to that time, and passing the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Philip, where there hung from a lamppost a banner that read “All Shall Be Well.” I read it and felt a stab of cynicism, thinking, “Stupid banner. What does it know?” Leaving aside the silliness of my personifying the banner in this way, I still think that my reaction to the rather arrogant proclamation it made was a legitimate one, and I imagine that every year many people hear some such proclamation at Christmas and respond with the same kind of skepticism. It is certainly easy to do so. Despite the fact that well-meaning souls stand on the sidelines and trumpet the well-meaning cliché that Jesus is the Reason for the Season or whatever other trite phrases they can come up with, Christmas is still commercialized enough to raise a twinge of disgust in even the most materialistic of us.

Christmas is, indeed, a season of paradoxes, if for no other reason than that we know all of this is going to happen and yet we go on celebrating it anyway. In my opinion, this is because Christmas, perhaps more than anything else, is about hope—a profound and daring hope—even hope against hope. With that in mind, it seems very appropriate that we celebrate it in December, when Winter is just really getting started and we all know that what is coming is three

months of cold and darkness and sickness, and yet we stand in the face of it and sing “Joy to the World.” Of course, we do this, not because we are excited about the cold and darkness and sickness that literally comes with this season and that figuratively is a part of all of this world all of the time, but because we believe that a warmth and light and healing has broken through and is here for us, even though at times it seems so faint that we wonder whether we’re just making fools or even lunatics of ourselves—fiddling, as it were, while Rome burns all around us.

We have this hope at Christmas as we have it in a more general and quiet way all of the time, and perhaps we are subject to this suspicion at and just after Christmas more than at any other time, or at least in a more obvious way: we may suspect that we are fooling ourselves before Christmas when we look around the commercialism and when we realize that what claims to be the most peaceful and happy time of the year is often really the most stressful, and we may get suspicious again right after Christmas when we see that the miracle that seemed to have happened—when wars stopped and everyone seemed willing to genuinely feel goodwill toward men and to provide for those who couldn’t provide for themselves—when we see that that miracle has seemingly dissipated and that everything has gone back to its normal, cold, dark, sick reality, it’s tempting just throw up our hands about the whole thing and say, “Well, now that silliness is over. Let’s get back to life as usual.”

This cavalier attitude is one of what I believe to be the three that Christians can and do take about Christmas once the holiday has officially passed. I think this attitude may be the most common one for us, and it may be really the most tragic—to regard as a religious holiday, even to understand and feel and believe that “Jesus is the Reason for the Season,” as the cliché goes, but to fail to see it as a *holy* day on which the world was forever changed many years ago and on which it can be forever changed again today if we are willing—that is a tragedy. Perhaps it is even a greater tragedy than taking the second attitude to which we are prone, though few of us would ever admit to taking it, which is this: disappointment—disappointment almost

to despair. As I write this, I have in mind passages from minister and author Frederick Buechner's *Wishful Thinking* and *Peculiar Treasures*, as well as sermons from *The Hungering Dark*, in which he relates the Christmas story to that of Noah and the Flood.

Not only is the comparison apt because of the stories' parallels, but it can also remind us of the ways in which these stories reflect our own experience, the ways in which those of us who really hear them can see ourselves in the shoes of the characters. Standing in Noah's shoes, we look down at the olive twig and then up again at the drowned world and think, "*This* is what is meant by 'All shall be well.' A twig?" Standing in the shoes of those shepherds years later, back to looking at cheap again and set of angels, we think, "Was *that* really the promise of the prophets? We're going to be made kings of the earth by a baby dressed in dustrags?" Standing in our own shoes, coming to church every week and praying and reading our Bibles, we think, "But why did my sister die of cancer? Was it too much to ask for that loan to come through so we wouldn't lose the house? Is he really coming back for us?"

We are very much entitled to those questions. In fact, for anyone to expect us to take the third attitude may be a pretty tall order, but if we can manage to take the risk, to force ourselves or even to fake it a little at first if that's what it takes—if we can hold that seemingly tiny warmth and light and healing in our hands and believe that it's enough to spread at least a little against the world's cold and darkness and sickness, and believe that someday enough of it is going to come from somewhere and finally wipe all of this hardship away... but here that cavalier smirk and skepticism is already rising like bile in our throats. *Here we go again*, it mutters, *more fluff about the magic of Christmas and visions of sugar plums. Didn't we hear enough of that before Christmas?* Well, apparently not. This is to be insisted: the problem is not that there's too much hype and fluff about the hope and magic and glory of Christmas; the problem is that the hope and magic and glory of Christmas gets mistaken for hype and fluff. Obscured and muffled though it is, there is still something about the season that promises to save the world. The reality behind the reality

of Christmas is a needle in a needle stack, and we have been asked to find it. Of course, until we do, the whole effort seems foolish, just as, in the words of Paul, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who have not been changed by it. After all, the message of Noah's story and of the Christmas story *is* the message of the cross: if you believe, you can be saved and the world can be remade around you. Believe in the rain, in the baby, and that religious radical killed by the government. Believe the foolishness.

Supposedly, before it ever became a story to be enacted in bad church pageants, the incarnation actually happened one night, and it happened without the bad church pageants' romance and "religionizing." There were no halos in the original Nativity scene, but there *was* the thick stench of livestock dung. There were no wise men bearing rich gifts (that happened over a year later, though we like to picture them there that night), but there *were* some ruffians from the countryside nosing around, trying to get a peek at the young mother's breasts as she nursed. Try to imagine it this way, the way it must have looked to Mary and Joseph. Try to imagine what *they* must have imagined would happen when the angel came to them with his news, and what they must have thought when it came to pass and was nothing like what either of them could have dreamed: the shrieking infant emerging from the womb, looking not like the Son of God but like any other human child, looking—in the jarring but truthful words of Frederick Buechner—"like nothing so much as raw beefsteak." Did Joseph see him and think for a moment that he'd been tricked, that he had dreamed the angel's message and that he really had married a loose woman, after all? And what was it like for him to realize that he hadn't, that this was exactly the unfathomable and paradoxical plan of God? A baby—"a real, live boy," even stranger than Pinocchio—sometimes eating, crying, sleeping, laughing or soiling himself, but *always* miraculous, and the greatest hope of the world. Mary's and Joseph's faces are stricken with wonder, and suddenly the Christmas story doesn't *need* romanticizing. We are awestruck to realize it, as well, and suddenly the world is made new.

Oh, of course the ugly things of this life have not disappeared, but they must be obscured by this unveiled beauty. A lighted candle does not burn up all the darkness, but wherever it goes it pushes the darkness away, “and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” God draws back the curtain to let in the light that drives our little darkness away, the light that, we know by some wild hope, will someday end this long Winter and bring us into the arms of Spring. Christmas is based on hope, on promise—it says, “All is not well, but it shall be.” Our whole religion is based on that. In the stories of Noah and Bethlehem and Christmas Present we see this common thread: the voice of God is booming down over the span of the centuries and it is saying, *Don’t give up on me. I know you face doubts and disappointments. I know sometimes you look around at the world and see no touch of me in it. But don’t give up on me.* He is, in his characteristically paradoxical way, answering those doubts and disappointments. Noah asks, “A twig, God? My source of hope is a twig?” *Yes. From a world—a wasteland—of water, I have brought you a twig in the mouth of a dove, and from that twig and from that dove and from you I will re-create the world before your very eyes.* The shepherds ask, “A baby, God? A lower-class child who is hunted by the government and sleeps in a feeding-trough?” *Yes. From a virgin’s womb—as unfertilized as any wasteland—I have brought you a baby boy, and from him and from those who, like you, proclaim his coming I will recreate the world.* At least, that is how we who have the advantage of hindsight hear God’s response to their questions. When we ask, “But what about my sister and the loan and the house? Will there really ever be a Second Coming?,” what we are more likely to hear is what they likely heard in their moments of doubt, if indeed we are right to imagine that they had such moments: we hear the question that God puts to us in return: *Are you willing to be faithful to your hope? Are you willing not to give up on me for a little longer, if that is what I ask of you?*

When, in *Wishful Thinking*, Beuchner describes Gabriel’s visit to Mary, he pictures the angel anxiously awaiting Mary’s response to his news, knowing that the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Indeed, the fate of the world hangs in the balance as we hear the

gospel today; the angels hold their breath in anticipation, in hope that we will believe, that we will be faithful to our hope—or, if you like, that we will be faithful to the One who gives us hope that he will be faithful. At Christmas, the moment of crisis may come, for example, when the choir's hymn really breaks through to us—*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel*—and we hear it as if for the first time: *I bring you tidings of great joy... God with us... All shall be well.* It is then that we are stripped of our defenses: our pretensions, our pride, our skepticism—the glory of the Lord shines round about us, and we are sore afraid, or something like afraid, seeing in that light that the things we would put our trust in can give us no hope—our only hope can be in that light, though to walk in such surreal brightness is sometimes to walk blindly.

It is surely not difficult to understand why we might be overwhelmed by anxiety, but in truth we are usually anxious mostly over what are mostly trivialities, and surely God wants to say to us, as Jesus once said to Martha, “Ah, you are anxious for so many things, but only one thing is necessary.” *Adeste fideles.* O come all ye faithful, and all ye who would like to be faithful if only that King, that Child, will help you to be. Come, let us adore him. And let us leave the manger as Noah might have left the ark, clutching that olive branch that will become our cherished keepsake for years to come, reminding us that hope in God is never empty. Let us leave the manger rejoicing and carrying a little warmth and light and healing into a world that so desperately needs it. Let us leave, anxious only to greet the child again when he returns as King, either with terrible, wonderful power to rule the world at the end, or with terrible, wonderful power to rule in our hearts whenever we hear his voice today. We and the world as we know it must in any case be changed; “even so, come, Lord Jesus,” and all shall be well.

Wes Biddy

Home Again (after Thomas Wolfe)

You can go home again
You just can't expect it to be the same

Is it truly home if it isn't the same?

I was walking the dog in the old neighborhood
A path I hadn't taken in years
Down the street
Across the dam
Toward High Gate Livery Stable

I could have described it before I saw it
I felt it, the broken line in my memory
The swinging gate on broken hinge
A sign post missing letters
Turnstyle overgrown with grass

I couldn't bear the sight for long
And the heat was too much for the dog,
the realization too heavy for me.

It's true what he said:
You Can't Go Home Again.

Anna Gregson

Memory

the sun sleepily lays down to bed
another day passes in my head
moon alertwakes once again

it all seems to occur in my head
moon laying back to bed
and sun rising nearly from the dead

the future is a constant stream
there is more left for me
there is no end to memory

Brett Daniel Wise

One Does What One Can

In the middle of the vegetable patch, among
locusts, swarms of nightcrawlers edging
their way into dust, the gorilla you imagined
lived in the treetops of the forest
lining your childhood lawn, the oatmeal
you were always forced to eat,
the time your mother made you clean
the dried hornet's nest out of the toy
you left outside all summer,
their brittle insect bodies rattling
against the pavement like paper,
their ruined home raining down as dust.

In the middle of all of this, and more,
you still marvel at the long look
of someone struck for the first time
with the extravagance of weight, of mass
in air, of bulk in motion. Still you imagine
the pounding in your ears at night
is a chronic hammering of song,
luminous diaries of squandered light.
One does what one can

in this world. In the middle of stringent
insecurities, a gluttony of poverty,
a dishwasher brimming with stars.
In the middle of the inescapable longing
to be completed, to find one's name
in the middle of another word.

Eugenia Fitzhugh

Music, Words: the Aesthetic Life



Photo by Anna Gregson

“Words don’t say it
Really.
It’s a heart thing.
A mind thing.
A soul thing.”

The Cellist

the
 cellist
 has
 all
 he
 is
 in
 it,
 for
 his
 the
 instrument
 is, which he holds,
 inhabits, and animates.
 he takes his heart in his
 hands, and leans it up
 against his body,
 embraces it as
 a lover would his
 dearest, then he draws
 his bow across his strings
 and out lets the blood-flow
 and beat of his heart. It is
 released in torrents of
 sound and almost
 silence
 'I
 I
 I
 I
 I'

To Jazz

Silence

Then rising from it a pulsing cacophony

“Til the rest of the voices join, completing

Together, unified in their competition to be heard

The brass

One loudly agreeing voice

Each boisterous member making himself heard

In turn silencing each other

The drum

His bass beat the steady heart of the conversation

His snare constantly affirming

The symbols making his emphatic points

The bass

Booming his voice

Joining the drum in keeping on track

Suavely in the background

His sensuous voice competes with none, yet finally
commands silence

The piano

The voice of harmony

Filling in the gaps, tinkling unity between them all

Affirming each in their spotlight

The guitar

Competes with no one as he agrees with the piano’s
wait

Rising, wailing, making himself heard

A voice

Over them all, yet taken over by them

Words, putting into human language what the music has
said

Until the voice of the brass takes them over

And the humanness is lost

To Jazz

Emily Jo

Untitled

Strum. Vibrant musical sound.
Waves of quivering vibes.
One lonely cry followed by another.
High... low all blend into one.
Slender smooth surface.
Gracefully long neck.
Quick fingers make you whine.
A rhythmic hand, you and I intertwine.
The melody of my soul.
Strum. You dive into the darkness
Of empty silence.
Hungry for your rhyme.
Flat. E minor. Melancholic.
Invisible aura lures my mind.
Strum. One final lonely sound.

Michelle M. Alvarez



Skittles by Lacey Miller,
oil on canvas

2 a.m. REALIZATION

O! The freedom of 21
Explain myself a thousand times
But I just realized
That this mirror I've
Been looking into is 2-way
My feet exist unfettered
My mind uncluttered
By the wealth experience
Stores up—and forgets to dust
Freedom is an empty stage
Sad, at first, for its
Lack of players
Glum without pops or set
Or even a name
But she is sly and unspoiled
Never a foot has touched her
Nor a playbill been writ for her
And she reeks of possibility
Where to go from here—unknown
but there's no rush
The air smells good and fresh
In this spot, and there's
A nice breeze
I think I'll enjoy it
For awhile
Who's to say it won't
Blow me to a different place
Where the scripts are deep
And the actors can weep
Or laugh on command?

Nicole Guinot

Deconstruction

Words don't say it
Really.

It's a heart thing.

A mind thing.

A soul thing.

You feel it.

Make me feel it;

Don't say it because

Words don't do the trick.

You know what I mean

Kind of

Mostly because you know what I don't mean.

Slippery, insufficient, unreliable...

These are the things words are made of.

Amie Thompson

December 24, 1991

Everyone was dark
until the men in mismatched suits
smiled, gravely lit the candles.
Be careful of the wax, folks,
the Grandfather said. Then
he was a pastor with a red
carnation to match his wife.

They had four sons
with wives and gaggles of children
squirming in green velvet, watching
hands glow and flicker, blinking
in mysteries of vaulted ceilings,
stained-glass stars, and whispers
of pearls barely used.

Three hundred flames
kept small and woozy dignity
on white cardboard disks. They
danced slowly for three hundred
faces, humming strong and yellowed
words that not even the ringing
soprano could find in her
final, crystal note.

Everyone was crying
Except for the children, who were
Too busy swinging legs in red tights,
Hearts thrumming and ripening violet
like tiny plums, understanding why
the dust that filled the room smelled
like two thousand years.

Amber Noel

At the Wedding

The groom needs grooming.
there's nothing much comely about him.
In face, he's a social misfit,
an upstart wimp, despised, rejected –
not the kind of guy you'd bring home for the holidays.

The bride's a slut
always hankering after another.
She's actually quite popular with some,
at least more comprehensible,
but not the kind of girl you'd write home about.

So here we have it.
The marriage feast of the lord and lady.
In fact, we have it once a week at least,
almost always with a song and dance.
Millennial anniversaries cry out for celebration

Barbara K. Olson

Orthodoxy

The flesh became word and dwelt among us.
And we beheld his glory,
The glory of the Christ Indoctrinate.

We witnessed the event, signed our names, and went home:
Assured that we had seen the truth,
Confident we would remember.

And we did.

Our nakedness shameful in remembrance of him,
We clothed our talk in righteousness
And skirted our thoughts with dogma.

We were flesh fashioned into notion.

Barbara K. Olson
(first appeared in HIS, December 1982)

Lost sonnets among the corsets
Strange memories of a time never to be
Tears in the dark full of longing
Tears for lost dreams.
Hate for the fear of wanting
Hidden manuscripts of wishes
dreams lived vicariously
Hate and envy become one
Pain merges with desire
Happily Ever After only happens for others.
To take a chance on one dream means death to another.
Tears for lost dreams.
Hidden wishes beneath the corsets.

Heather L. Hyder



Abstraction by Bonnie Maples,
oil on canvas

Will my words dance?

Will my words dance?
 How I long to make them
 Fly and spin!
 Leaping through clouds
 And crowds of people.
 Curl around them,
 Like two lips wanting
 To smile...
 Pas-de-chat and ronde-de-jeune
 Like water sliding through
 My fingers
 A trickle and a splash
 Spark, fire, then ash
 The glow still hot
 On my face.
 Port-du-bras and extend...
 Hmm...delicious
 Roll the eyes and
 Lick the lips
 Coming to life
 Like the shock of
 Salt on a wound
 Entirely composed
 of ready opinions...
 Positions...
 ...5,6,7,8...

Nicole Guinot

On journaling

the pages fill with what if I don't know or understand
or have I missed the singlemost greatest amazing thing
in being lonelylovedlovely
printed cursive silly red streaks and black ink
and tearstained blank pages bloated
with the words of a little girlwoman
who knows nothing more than to writewritewrite
and expunge and exploitexpectexact the information
misinformed philanthropist phonetagphilosopher
with a poised pen in a misshapen hand

Lindsay Duncan

A Dream, A Dance

Men sleep and dream.

And with every close of the newest novel,
or shutting of some dog-eared diary,
(or just your basic boring book)
the words rearrange like ant-farm builders,
crawl in, around, and through each other,
trade places, trade pages, trade context,
muddle themselves like morning thoughts.
They dance to the unheard-of plotlines—
things never thought of—
forms of literature never begun—
the book of dreams in character, adjective, plot,
time has no meaning,
a macabre, quixotic, paranoid version of the story
like the world through carnival mirrors.
And when we reach and push our
forefingers, thumbs behind the bookmark,
to begin again,
every *the*, *of*, and *and* rushes
back to its position,
like I rush to math class when I oversleep,
living, wakeful but frozen.
The dream descends,
and we read the awakened and awkward
reordered, boring letters,
tongue-tied and cubby-holed.

Jacob Ogle

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